19: Marshall M-5 (ca. 1910) 1922 AP1 Burma
Karen AP7

No one can presume to predict the outcome of the present unsettled conditions. We can only hope that better days are in store for the cultivators, whether Burman or Karen.

If, before the war, a man owned his field and cattle without encumberance or other debts, he could till some twenty acres and make a comfortable living for himself and family. If, however, he was under the necessity of borrowing money and hiring men and cattle, he could hardly keep his head above water.

There are some Karens who own large fields. They may have acquired them by careful management, by purchase, or by foreclosing loans. Many of these proprietors make a business of hiring out their fields to men who cultivate them at a rental of from ten to fifteen baskets of paddy per acre, the cultivator supplying his own materials and help. In case the owner has oxen, he rents them at the usual price. In addition, he usually makes a loan of cash to his tenant, on which he gets a big return, namely, a hundred baskets of paddy for the sum of fifty rupees for six months. If the tenant borrows from a money-lender, he has to pay anywhere from fifteen to fifty percent a year for it.

On the plains the cultivator is almost entirely dependent on his single crop of paddy. If high water has washed out his first settings, there is not time enough left to raise other produce after the water has disappeared. Under these circumstances they sometimes plant sesame, but it requires only a little less time to mature than paddy. The lack of water in the dry season renders cultivation impossible without extensive irrigation.

Along the river-bottoms may be found a few plantain groves, patches of tobacco, sugar-cane, or vegetables; but these are unusual sights. They may add a little to the cultivator's income. But very few persons derive their chief support from such gardens.

The Karen on the plains do not observe the old religious customs of the hill people. Many times they resort to Burmese soothsayers to prognosticate the proper times for planting, reaping, and other tasks. Not a few, however, follow the old ceremonies in greater or less part. A ceremonial similar to "theh a hkü" in the hills [1] is observed on the plains where it is designated "mo a si." It is performed when the paddy is set out. Offerings are seldom seen along the paths in this region, but when the paddy has been winnowed an offering is made to "Hpi Bi Yaw" by transferring the rim of earth around a crab's burrow to the summit of the pile of

[1] See ante, pp. 78, 79.